

REMARKS

Applicant has amended Claims 28 and 32, the only independent claims in this application, to distinguish over the patent to Barbarin.

Barbarin shows a support ring 11 which is made of plastic (see column 1, lines 59-60), and which therefore does not provide substantial structural support for the joint. In the present invention, by contrast, the support ring is a structural member (see the present specification at page 2, line 19 through page 3, line 4, and page 9, line 14). The present specification teaches that the support ring is made of metal (page 7, lines 18-19).

Claims 28 and 32 have been amended to recite that the support ring is a structural member, and that it is made of metal. Dependent Claims 29 and 33 have been amended to delete the now redundant recitation of a metallic structure.

Barbarin shows a "plate" (13 or 14) which does not have bolt holes. Claims 28 and 32 have been amended to recite explicitly that the plate has a plurality of bolt holes.

Applicant submits that the present claims, as amended, define a structure which is not taught or suggested by Barbarin. The claims now require that the support ring be a structural, metallic member. And the claims require the presence of the bolt holes. Since these features are not shown in Barbarin, or in the combination of Barbarin and Breaker, Applicant submits that the claims are allowable over these references.

With respect to the rejection based on Johnson in view of Aichroth in view of Jones, Applicant incorporates by reference the arguments made in the appeal brief of August 4, 2006. Applicant submits that the claims are allowable for the reasons given in that brief.

With respect to the rejections in which Aichroth is the primary reference, Applicant again incorporates by reference the arguments made in the appeal brief of August 4, 2006. Applicant notes further that the claims now explicitly require bolt holes formed in the plate. It would not be obvious to form holes in the structure of Aichroth because, as explained in detail in the brief, Aichroth contains explicit teachings which entirely negate the suggestion of forming such holes.

Applicant therefore submits that the claims are allowable over all combinations in which Aichroth is the primary reference, for the reasons given in the prior appeal brief, and for the reasons given above.

For the reasons given above, Applicant submits that the claims are allowable. Applicant requests reconsideration by the Examiner, and early favorable action.